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<http://www.theindependent.com/stories/121104/new_wasting11.shtml>

Chronic wasting disease identified in deer near Grand Island, Nebraska

Chronic wasting disease has been identified in a deer killed during November 2004 in the Cornhusker Wildlife Management Area west of Grand Island, which is the farthest east the disease has been detected.

Game and Parks is asking hunters to submit heads of their deer shot in the area from 1-9 Jan 2004.

Jim Douglas, Wildlife Division administrator with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, said the positive results on chronic wasting disease (CWD) came in late Thursday [16 Dec 2004]. The disease had previously not been found outside the Panhandle. The sample was turned in by a hunter at a Game and Parks check station, and the group now hopes to collect more samples. "At this point, we have one positive case," he said. "You can't draw anything from that. We want to take more samples and see what we have."

Biologists now plan to collect 50 more deer samples from the area, and Douglas has asked hunters to submit voluntarily the heads of deer harvested within a 30-mile radius of Grand Island from 1-9 Jan 2004, which is muzzle loader deer season. There are Game and Parks checkpoints in Aurora, Central City, Clay Center, Grand Island, Hastings, Kearney and St. Paul.

Chronic wasting disease, which was 1st confirmed in Nebraska in 2000, is a transmissible neurological disease of deer and elk that produces small lesions in brains of infected animals. It is characterized by loss of body condition, behavioral abnormalities and death. There is no scientific evidence that the disease can infect humans, but as a precaution, people are advised not to eat an infected deer.

Ryan King, assistant director and environmental health specialist with the Central District Health Department, said that with any disease of this sort, even if it is in animals, precautions become very important. It's recommended that anyone who sees a deer or elk exhibiting odd behavior related to chronic wasting disease leave it alone. "There's no evidence it causes problems, but people should still take precautions," he said. "There are still some things we don't know."

Results for tests on 5800 deer previously collected in the state are expected to be completed within the next few weeks, Douglas said. The disease can spread through deer herds, though the exact manner of transmission remains unknown.

Cami Wells, extension educator with the Hall County Cooperative Extension office, organized an event for hunters earlier this year [2004] that addressed chronic wasting disease specifically. She said now that the disease has come to Grand Island, it's likely more educational classes will be held. "It was a concern for a lot of people," she said. "People want the most up-to-date information, so we'll probably do it again."

Wells also said many hunters will probably take notice, since the disease has been found in the area. The extension office has more information on the disease. In the meantime, Douglas said, Game and Parks will keep an eye on the situation and is hoping hunters will provide more information as they can. "We've been monitoring it," he said. "We'll keep monitoring it."

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[It is hunting season in many of the states in the USA. Many states are doing hunter surveillance. The regulatory authorities of the state are requesting that the hunters submit the heads of their cervids for voluntary CWD testing. Most states have a program in place to notify the hunter if the test is positive. - Mod.TG]

[see also:

Chronic wasting disease update 2004 (04) [20041212.3290](#)

Chronic wasting disease update 2004 (03) [20041123.3133](#)

Chronic wasting disease update 2004 (02) [20040519.1335](#)

Chronic wasting disease update 2004 (01) [20040408.0959](#)

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<<http://www.promedmail.org>>. Accessed 21 Dec 2004.